



Serve with Splendour

From a 140-bed hospital in 2005 to 1,000 beds in next five years— that is the galloping pace with which SPS Apollo Hospital, Ludhiana has chalked out its spiraling growth, finds out **Rita Dutta**

The industrial capital of Punjab, Ludhiana, is not just renowned for woolen and hosiery products. This town with a population of around 30 lakh has a grandeur attached to it— after all it is in proud possession of maximum number of BMWs in India! So, for the residents of this fast developing town with deep pockets, a state-of-the-art hospital was a sin qua non.

Thus stemmed SPS Hospital located at Sherpur Chowk on GT Road. The 240-bed hospital is the largest and one of the most successful private hospitals in North of Delhi- catering not only to patients from Punjab, but also from J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. The hospital also receives a regular flow of NRI patients from Canada, the UK, the US and foreign patients from Kenya, UAE and Fiji. The international patients from these countries usually flock for hysterectomy, bariatric surgery and also complex deliveries. With steady stream of patients, it is no wonder

that in its fourth year of operation, the revenue for the last financial year was Rs 75 crore.

Designed in modern architecture, the hospital boasts of a swanky lobby (with a height of 30 metres). The beauty of the lobby is heightened by a magnificent and beautiful dome that imbues the surrounding with sun light.



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- Jugdiep Singh

Managing Director

SPS Apollo Hospital Ludhiana



"In the next five years, we plan to have 1,000 beds in Punjab, with Ludhiana hospital as a hub"

- Thakur Uday Singh

Chairman SPS Apollo Hospital Ludhiana

Flashback

It is believed that Sri Satguru Pratap Singh Ji, the spiritual head of Namdhari Sikhs, had a vision of bringing a modern and affordable healthcare facility in Ludhiana. He passed on his vision to his son, Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, who showed his love and affinity for healthcare by sponsoring more than a 100 cardiac surgeries in different hospitals of India. The vision of world-class healthcare in Ludhiana was carried forward by Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh's nephew Thakur Uday Singh, Chairman, Namdhari Seeds Private Limited, one of India's largest seed exporting companies.

Says Thakur Uday Singh, Chairman, SPS Apollo Hospital, and also the largest shareholder of SPS Apollo, "We are privileged to have carried forward the dream of Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji. We shall all endeavour to make this hospital a destination of choice for healthcare."

Thus, the Rs-225-crore SPS Apollo Hospital project on GT Road was conceived in 2001. The hospital is a JV between Apollo Hospital and SJS Holdings Limited (the company constituted by Thakur Uday Singh as majority stake holder to start the healthcare venture), with Apollo Hospital providing operational and technical support— since its inception. The land, building and equipment— all belong to the SPS Group. All recruitments are done by SPS Group with concurrence from Apollo.

The eight-storeyed hospital building, spread over a seven acre land and having floor space of 3,30,000 square feet, was commissioned in March 2005 with 140 beds. The hospital was formerly inaugurated by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in September 2005.

Active Progress

Today, the hospital has expanded to 240 beds, but is scalable up to 325 beds. The hospital, which employs 52 full-time consultants and 800 employees, attained operational breakeven in 2007-2008. Says Jugdiep Singh, Managing Director, SPS Apollo Hospital, "With four years of operations, our patient and revenues have constantly doubled year-on-year. In this short span, we have established ourselves as a centre of excellence in many fields and touched lives of around three lakh patients."

Many patients troop in by word-of-mouth publicity or as Abhijit Singh, Analyst-Business and Strategy, SPS Apollo Hospital, points out, "Being located off the GT Road has been a boon as people passing by have been amazed by a modern hospital in such an area, dropped in to assess the facility and decided to come back for treatment."

According to Jugdiep Singh, "The USP of the hospital lies in the fact that the hospital provides comprehensive healthcare service under one roof in north of Delhi. We also ensure access to well-qualified and dedicated staff, international quality of healthcare, safe environment, respect for rights, privacy and confidentiality and ethical and transparent processes. Additionally, we are a low-cost healthcare provider. When compared to hospitals in Delhi, we are 25 per cent cheaper."

Quality Wise



The grand lobby of the hospital



One of the steel OTs of the hospital

The commitment to quality and patient safety is evident in the incredible fact that it is the first hospital in South-East Asia to be accredited by JCI— within two years of its operation. It bagged JCI in February 2007.

The hospital has adopted practices like lean and six sigma to improve processes. It has devised 150 quality indicators. Says Dr SP Singh, Chief Operating Officer, SPS Apollo Hospital, "We are VAP-free, our CR-UTI rates are lesser than National Healthcare Safety Network from March 2008 to February 2009. Our mortality rate for cardiac surgery is less than two per cent."

A Pat on the Back

For a state with dwindling female sex ratio (798 per 1,000 males against the national ratio of 927 per 1,000 males) it is encouraging to know that the HR department of the hospital is

completely manned by a team of women professionals. Even though it may be a mere co-incidence but an interesting fact is also that Apollo group's torch-bearers are also three fiery alpha women!

To boost the declining female sex ratio and to curb female foeticide, the hospital holds talks against female foeticide in various villages of Punjab. "We also hand-over a sum of Rs 1,100 to a family giving birth to a female child in our hospital," says J Sivakumaran, Vice President - Commercial, SPS Apollo.

CSR

Taking cue from the recent horrifying incident of a Delhi school girl succumbing to asthma attack in the absence of any nebuliser in the school premises, SPS Apollo Hospital, in an attempt to prevent such incidents in Ludhiana distributed free nebulisers in 11 schools in Ludhiana. "We have earmarked Rs five lakh for this activity," says Sunil Mehta, Manager, Marketing, SPS Apollo.

Additionally, the hospital has devised a life-saver programme to train highway police, gym instructors, school children and collegians in BLS. The hospital has constituted a special committee for training residents and school children on first aid. It regularly conducts first aid programme in resident welfare association and visits different colonies to conduct BLS. It distributes free medical kits to residents during such camps.

For a town with high pollution level, the hospital has distributed free masks to cops and also conducted free chest X-rays for them. The hospital claims to have spent Rs six crore on CSR, just last financial year.

Significant Achievements

The hospital has a long list of accomplishments.

- It has pioneered bariatric surgery in Punjab, when in July 2005 it conducted stomach bypass on a 120-kilogram-man and reduced his weight to 69 kilograms.
- The hospital has pioneered joint replacement surgeries, rotating platform knee replacement (2008) and mini incision hip replacement (2008) and awake beating heart surgery (2009)— all in Punjab.
- Renowned for providing quality mother and child care in North India, the hospital successfully treated a 24-week gestation baby in 2008.
- It is also amongst the very few hospitals to introduce surgical cure for type II diabetes.
- In May 2009, it successfully conducted beating heart surgery with aortic carotid bypass.

The Challenges

As with any new hospital, the initial challenge was to fill up the beds. Having no airport in the town only made it more difficult, mainly for getting international patients. The nearest airport is in Chandigarh (90 kilometers away) or the international airport Amritsar (150 kilometers away).

"With the middle class segment in mind, another ongoing challenge is to keep cost low in a price sensitive market like Punjab, without compromising on the quality. Strict inventory control, material management and operational efficiency are other challenges," says Jugdiep Singh.

The Road Ahead

Encouraged by recognition and spurred by success, the hospital has chalked out ambitious plans, ranging from expansion to foraying into education.

Oncology: The hospital would soon complete its gamut of cancer care by starting radiation oncology in a few months time. "We would equip the centre with IGRT," says Sivakumaran.

But the long-term plan is to start a cancer hospital SPS Cancer Hospital in the same premises at an estimated cost of Rs 45 crore to Rs 50 crore. "The project report is still being prepared for that," says Jugdiep Singh.

Tele-triage: In a unique concept to boost fast medical help to patients/ relatives who call the hospital for medical help, the hospital is toying with the idea of tele-triage. "Often calls made to the hospital do not reach the right department. Sometimes, immediate medical help needs to be given. So, we want trained staff handle such hospital calls, so as to guide patients with the right advice," says Jugdiep Singh.

Bariatric Wing: To cater to the rising demand of bariatric surgery by international patients, the hospital is starting a dedicated bariatric wing.

ICU beds: By next year, the hospital plans to scale up its ICU beds from 60 to 100. "With 100 ICU beds we would be the largest

ICU set up in Punjab's private healthcare set up," says Jugdiep Singh.

Within a span of six months, the hospital would also start a 15-bed gastro critical care unit. This unit would later start liver transplantations, with help from Indrapastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi, which has done record number of cases in liver transplant. "With alcohol-related disease being acute in the state of Punjab, the need for liver transplantation is high in this region. As of now, people have to go all the way to Delhi for liver transplant," says Jugdiep Singh. The hospital would also upgrade its two-bed paediatric ICU to 10 beds.

Education: Medical education is on the radar. Addressing shortage of nurses, it is soon starting BSc nursing college, for which a separate land has been allotted around seven kilometers from the hospital. In collaboration with IGNOU, the hospital is also starting a certificate course for lab technicians, dialysis technicians and OT technicians. It has also applied for DNB programme for general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, radio diagnostics and anaesthetics.

It is also exploring the option of starting a medical college in the future. With such well-laid out plans, the target of Rs 100 crore turnover for this financial year does not seem all that impossible.

Step-by-Step

After kissing success in Ludhiana, the group is accelerating its growth story by tapping the virgin markets of other districts of Punjab. "In the next five years, we plan to have around 1,000 beds in Punjab, with this hospital acting as a hub. We would explore all business models (acquisition, Greenfield, brownfield and management consultant) to achieve that target. We want to do this in association with Apollo," says Uday Singh.

So, be ready to hear more buzz about this group in the years to come.

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Satguru Partap Singh Apollo Hospitals

Ludhiana is home to many of the leading industrial groups in India. SPS Apollo Hospitals, a 350 bed state of the art hospital, was set up in Ludhiana in the year 2005

This iconic landmark on GT Road has set new standards in healthcare, hitherto unheard of in this part of India. It all began with the desire of his holiness Satguru Partap Singh ji, to have a world class health facility in Punjab to alleviate the sufferings of humanity, by offering them quality and affordable health care. This dream was fulfilled was by the present head of the Namdhari Sangat, his holiness Jagjit Singh ji.

His holiness Satguru Jagjit Singh ji called upon Thakur Uday Singh ji, The Chairman of SPS Apollo Hospitals, to fulfill his holiness Satguru Partap Singh ji's dream of setting a super speciality hospital in Punjab.

Thakur Uday Singh ji, a visionary and a leading Industrialist having diverse business interests in Bangalore, set out on the noble mission of setting up a super speciality hospital in Ludhiana in accordance with Satguruji's wish.

Thakur Uday Singh ji entrusted the mantle of overseeing the commissioning of this prestigious project to Shri Jugdiep Singh, the Managing Director of SPS Apollo Hospitals. Under the able leadership of Shri Jugdiep Singh, this hospital was constructed and commissioned in the year 2005. The hospital was inaugurated in the year 2005 by the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh.

Satguru Partap Singh Apollo Hospitals

Set up under the auspices of Satguruji, this hospital was founded on the following core principles :

- Ethics
- Transparency
- Quality and affordability

It hardly came as a surprise to everyone, when this hospital became the first hospital in South East Asia to achieve the prestigious JCI accreditation within two years of operations.

JCI accreditation brought with it a new set of challenges. The challenge of maintaining the highest standards of excellence, the challenge of attending to each and every patient with a single-minded dedication and the challenge of improving continuously with every passing day.

SPS Apollo Hospital has scored very high on all these parameters. At SPS Apollo Hospitals, the hospital has the most eminent panel of medical professionals, well trained paramedical staff and the most caring nursing professionals. Backing them are the latest state-of-the-art equipments and the best infrastructure supported by cutting edge technology.

The Managing Director of SPS Apollo Hospitals

Jugdiep Singh, the Managing Director of SPS Apollo Hospitals is a visionary and a management professional who leads from the front. He has been instrumental in making this hospital what it is today. His pioneering and spirited efforts have helped this hospital scale one peak after another. Be it JCI accreditation, or the commissioning of the hospital at one of the lowest capital costs in the country, or be it our achievement of clocking a sales CAGR of 83 per cent since inception and breaking even in a period of three years.

A firm believer in the core values of ethics and transparency, he has been successful in building up a strong team of professionals equally committed to the core values of the

hospital. He has been able to foster a spirit of camaraderie amongst all medical, para-medical and administration professionals resulting in highest standards of medical- care being provided to patients.

Right from the stage of patient admission till the stage of discharge, all medical and non-medical activities are meticulously reviewed by him. It is to his credit that treatment procedures at SPS Apollo Hospitals are orchestrated in a highly coordinated and professional manner and that too at a cost which is very affordable.

Medical Milestones

- India's youngest premature baby (at 24 weeks gestation) treated at SPS Apollo.
- Rare combined hip replacement and cardiac bypass surgery on a 75-year-old male. There has been no such case reported in medical literature.
- First rotating platform knee replacement in the region.
- Successful knee replacement surgery on a 99-year-old lady.
- First to perform awake craniotomy in the region.
- First to perform bariatric (weight loss) surgery north of Delhi.
- First to introduce mini-incision hip replacement surgery in Punjab and neighbouring states.